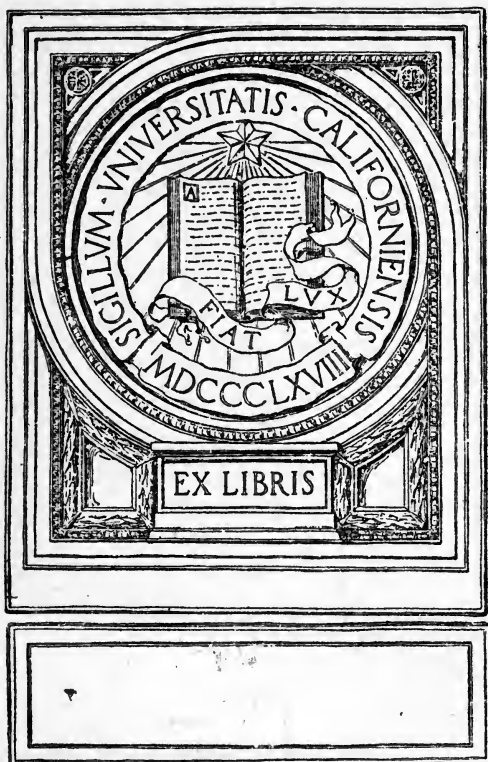




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## The Ethical Approach to Theism

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# The Ethical Approach to Theism

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reelard* BY  
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## PREFACE.

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THE chief aim of the following pages is to make clear the distinction between the two chief types of religious thought, the pantheistic and the theistic; and to show on what basis in experience and reflection the latter rests. Its chief characteristic is that it finds the final Reality in the Good rather than in the Whole. Its method is selective and teleological, and it finds the answer to the problem of the universe less through an induction than through an imperative, the imperative of the Good upon the will of man. The Good is that which attracts all things, "moving them as the object of their love." In the third chapter, this thought of Aristotle's is examined in its relation, both positive and negative, to Christian

theism; and if it be objected that I have given too great a prominence in so short an essay to the discussion of Aristotle's theology, I can only express my agreement with the view of Professor Muirhead (*International Journal of Ethics*, Jan. 1910, p. 140), that in this all-important region modern theology might gain much by returning to the source on which the greatest spirits of the Middle Ages drew so freely. Nor can we readily find a better way of approaching the ever urgent problems of Progress and Permanence, and Immanence and Transcendence, than through the thought of "the master of those that know." At the same time, the extent to which Greek speculation at its highest fails to express the Christian ideal must also be pointed out, and this I have tried to do briefly at the close of the chapter.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Professor Pringle-Pattison and Dr D. M. Ross for their kindness in reading the manuscript and the proofs respectively, and for their valuable advice.

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# THE ETHICAL APPROACH TO THEISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF THEISM.

IN a previous inquiry into the philosophical bearings and relations of Christian Ethics I attempted to show that the various elements in that sphere of thought can best be expressed and unified in the idea of a Spiritual Order. But the inquiry also pointed to the conclusion that this conception inevitably leads beyond the strictly ethical sphere towards that of metaphysics or theology.<sup>1</sup> For the very idea of a supreme *Order* carries

<sup>1</sup> *A Philosophical Study of Christian Ethics* (Blackwood, 1911), Ch. XIII. ; cf. pp. 203-7, 225.

with it the attribution of reality. It cannot remain a mere system of precepts or ethical laws, but it must be understood also as determining, for him who accepts it, the deepest characteristics of the universe in which he lives and acts. The attempt to work out the Christian ideal, whether in thought or practice, to its full extent leads to certain conclusions regarding the ultimate nature of things; nor can Christian *virtue* finally be self-contained, or severed from the element of *faith*.

The closeness of this connection was hardly overstated by Nietzsche when he said, "If Christian faith is given up, the *right* to Christian morality is pulled from under the feet." This faith may be stated in the most general terms as the belief that goodness is not a mere ideal, existing *in vacuo*, but that it is supremely and ultimately real; and that the Spiritual Order represents not only the best order that we can conceive and the highest object of endeavour, but also the final truth of things. It is the object of the present essay to show what is implied in this position, to state the most serious objec-

tion that can be brought against it, and to throw out some suggestions as to the lines along which it may best be defended.

First, then, we must ask what is involved in this transition from the ethical to the religious point of view. Clearly it involves an ethical determination of the Object of religion. But this cannot be thought of as less than the highest Reality; and so we find ourselves defining Reality in terms of Value, and asserting that the True is in the last resort identical with the Good.<sup>1</sup> Thus the progress of religious experience, and of the intellectual construction which follows after, becomes very largely a process of *selection* or discrimination, in which certain elements in life are rejected as unworthy to be attributed to the Divine Nature, while at the same time other qualities—those which we judge to be noblest in our own experience—are alone attributed to God. The development of religion in many lands and ages has shown this increasingly selective character, which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Höffding's definition of religion (in his *Philosophy of Religion*) as dealing with the relation of Value to Reality or as the unification of the two spheres of ethical and scientific thought.

grows with the growing sense that mere power cannot command true worship, but that worship can only be rendered by a moral being to a divinity not only greater and more powerful, but better than himself. And if worship be the essentially religious attitude, it follows that the Object of religion cannot be thought of as other than supremely good. Hence, whatever intellectual difficulties may be involved, the man who has learned to reflect upon the nature of goodness, and is endeavouring to realise it in practice, cannot recognise any supremacy which is not moral and spiritual as the essential characteristic of the God whom he worships.

Of many witnesses to the strength of this religious attitude, I shall refer to one only. Plato possessed to the full the Greek passion for intellectual thoroughness and unity, the desire for the "synoptic" view which brings all things together under a single principle of goodness and truth. Yet in the Second Book of the *Republic* he introduces his famous criticism of the Greek poets for their attribution of non-moral and immoral actions to the gods by the following words:—



"Then the Good is not the cause of all things, but only of those which are of a right nature, while of evil things it is not the cause?"

"Most certainly.

"Then God, inasmuch as He is good, cannot indeed be the cause of all things, as most men consider; but He is the cause of the smaller part only of the things which make up the lot of men, and not the cause of the larger, for our good things are greatly outnumbered by the evil. The good things, then, we must ascribe to no other than God, but for the bad we must seek out some other cause, and not attribute them to God."<sup>1</sup>

A clearer expression could hardly be found of the selective character of the ethico-religious consciousness, or of its determination not to make width or universality the supreme test of religious truth, but to ascribe to God only those qualities which—rarer, it may be, and less potent in our ordinary experience—approve themselves to the moral judgment as highest and noblest. But this statement of Plato's, just because of

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.*, 379 BC.

its unflinching directness, suggests the line of criticism to which theism of this distinctively ethical type lies open. It may well be asked whether this resolution to treat religion solely on moral lines, and this refusal to allow any but ethical categories to enter into the statement of its truth, do not involve a confusion between different spheres of thought, and perhaps even a surrender of other interests which are also vital. We may admit that determinations of value are final and supreme in their own sphere—the sphere of conscience; but is it not illegitimate and invalid to use them as the final tests of reality as well? For the intellect also has its rights, its criteria of truth as pure and disinterested as the moral criteria of value. It also has its ideal—the ideal of universality,—and it claims its full share in determining the idea of God, since He is the highest Object of knowledge as well as of ethical endeavour.

This, briefly expressed, suggests the criticism whose validity it is our task to estimate. A little reflection shows that it has on its side another of the great tendencies which go to make up the religious life of mankind. For

beside the current of religious thought, which we have considered—that of ethical theism,—there runs the stream of pantheism.<sup>1</sup> Here the method is not *selective* but collective—or better, *synoptic*,—and its aim is to reach the universal, to arrive at an appreciation of the All, rather than of the ethically perfect. In one of its forms it is predominantly an intellectual religion, grounded in the thought of an all-pervading and eternal Mind, which constitutes the unity of an otherwise formless or chaotic universe. In proportion as idealism has emphasised the primacy of mind over matter, it has become a more urgent problem to explain the co-ordination of the different minds which know the universe, each from its own standpoint, or perchance actually constitute the universe as idealism understands it. The function which matter extended through space plays in the view of unreflective common-sense or of materialism, must be otherwise fulfilled in this subtler philosophy; and so the idea is reached of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, Vol. II. Lect. i. ("The Two Types of Religion"), and especially the two complementary epigrams of Goethe there quoted.

a universal Thinker, whose thought embraces and unifies that of all finite thinkers. Without this all-inclusive and all-sheltering Intelligence, individual intelligences would be scattered abroad in an inconceivable dispersion,—a pluralism so radical that all union or contact would be impossible. Some idealists may be content to meet the difficulty by postulating with Kant the existence of a *focus imaginarius*, from which every finite experient gains an orientation for his own thought; but most will proceed, with many of Hegel's followers, to find an answer to the epistemological problem of unity in the conception of an Absolute Subject or Mind.

It is not essential to our present purpose to discuss the difficulties of this theory—especially the problems of error and of the relation of the Universal Mind to finite thinkers; nor need we trace its history from the “Divine Mind” of Plato's later dialogues, through the *anima mundi* of the Stoics, to its full development in modern idealism. It will be sufficient to illustrate it by a single sentence from Berkeley, who argues that the sensible world as we know it has an existence independent of any

single finite mind, but cannot exist in isolation from *all* mind, and that thus "it necessarily follows that there is an *omnipresent eternal Mind*, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner and according to such rules as He Himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *laws of nature*." <sup>1</sup>

But in whatever form we consider this theory, its essential aspect for the present argument is the universality, and so to say impartiality, of knowledge to which it points. The ideal of science is comprehensiveness, in the double sense of width and minuteness of survey. It does not "pick and choose" its facts, nor does it attempt to discriminate their varying values. Merely that they are *facts* is all the value that it seeks. As facts, they have doubtless their different degrees of importance or insignificance; but no element of ethical or æsthetic evaluation is allowed to enter. So it comes that, when God is thought of as primarily the Universal or Absolute Mind, this characteristic of entire impartiality must be attributed to Him. The

<sup>1</sup> *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous.*

principle of selection, for whose importance we previously contended, must now be rejected; and we must suppose that all things, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, are equally present to His all-embracing knowledge.

But at other times the same type of thought has appeared in closer relation to the emotional side of man's nature, and less entirely determined by the intellectual interest in unity and completeness. When we so find it, we recognise more readily that pantheism has a distinct religious value and does not appeal to the reason alone. In the Western world this stream of thought first sprang forth in the teaching of Xenophanes, the early Greek thinker who poured scorn on the attribution of human qualities to the deity, and whose dim figure stands out from Aristotle's page as he "contemplates the whole heaven and says the One is, namely God."<sup>1</sup> Of his successors incomparably the greatest was Spinoza, who also refused to acknowledge a deity thought of as subject to passions like those of men, and as ready to provide for the satisfaction of their material desires. On the contrary,

<sup>1</sup> *Metaph.*, I. 986<sup>b</sup> 24.

Spinoza found the satisfaction of his profoundly religious nature in the contemplation of the one Substance which underlies all the varying phenomena of the world which we know.

Spinoza's influence was carried into the religious thought of the Nineteenth Century by Schleiermacher, who, in his earlier writings at least, taught men to look for the essence of religion not so much in any distinctively moral experience as in the "sense and taste for the infinite," in the direct awareness of the Whole and of man's complete dependence on it, and especially in the apprehension of the all-embracing "eternal laws." "Rise to the height of seeing how these laws equally embrace all things, the greatest and the smallest, the world systems and the mote which floats in the air, and then say whether you are not conscious of the divine unity and the eternal immutability of the world."<sup>1</sup> No one now needs to be exhorted by Schleiermacher's eloquent appeal to recognise the religious character of Spinoza's pantheism: the recognition is freely granted both to Spinoza

<sup>1</sup> This is the theme of the second and longest of the *Reden*. See Professor Oman's translation, pp. 35 ff., 67, 103, 277 ff.

and to his great follower. There is indeed present here an element of worship; but it is called forth rather by the sense of the supreme Reality as at once infinitely great and very near to the spirit of man, than by the thought of its infinite moral perfection.

This conception of God and religion has inspired great thinkers in the West, but it is in the East that its chief home is to be found. In a single phrase of Spinoza's *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* there is expressed the thought, afterwards fully worked out in the *Ethics*, that the secret of blessedness, through which entrance is secured into every other good, is the realisation of "the union existing between the mind and the whole of nature." But two thousand years earlier the sages of India had not only proclaimed this truth, but had taken the further step which passes from union to identity. Where Spinoza pointed to union with the infinite as the highest end, the yet bolder philosophers of Brahmanism asserted an already subsisting identity, of which the wise man might become assured, and in the experience of which he might find satisfaction



and bliss. For these philosophers *Ātman* as the soul of the universe and *âtman* as the self of the thinker were one and the same—

“He who, Eternal, Conscious, One, fulfils  
The longings of the Transient, Conscious, Many—  
Those wise men who behold Him in the self,  
They and no others have eternal joy.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a subject which might be pursued far. But for our present purpose there is just one point which must be again emphasised. From this standpoint, the object of religion is the All, whether it be sought without or within. Universality is the supreme standard, and the sense of nearness to—or even of complete oneness with—the universal Substance or Mind or Self is the highest end. But there is clearly no place here for the discriminating, selective process, which for ethical theism is of such central importance. Nay, its legitimacy is firmly denied. It is not for the finite mind to choose out those elements in experience, which for its own purposes it considers beautiful or good, and to say that

<sup>1</sup> *Kathaka Upanishad*, cited by J. N. Farquhar, *A Primer of Hinduism*, p. 64; cf. Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* (Eng. tr.), pp. 38 ff., 166 ff., 230.

they and they only are supremely real, while it excludes from the Divine Nature all their opposites. In the supreme Reality all orders of reality are included and represented, those which we condemn as base or ugly or evil as well as those which we admire and approve. And just on this account it has been pointed out that, amid all the qualities which in their highest degree are attributed by ancient Hindu thought to Brahman, there is one missing. "Brahman is not conceived as holy: we are nowhere told that Brahman is righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

But this limitation, fatal as it is from the point of view of ethical theism, is entirely consistent from that of the pantheistic thought which seeks to find God equally in, or behind, all the phenomena of the world. To describe the supreme Reality as holy or as righteousness involves a discrimination, and an apotheosis of moral qualities to the exclusion of others, which is alien alike from the method, the temper, and the ideal of the philosophy which

<sup>1</sup> Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 42. It is worth remarking that *worship* is held in these writings to be a lower attitude, appropriate to the gods, but not to the *Ātman*. (Deussen, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 f., 91.)

we are considering. The latter rather bids the religious thinker, as Spinoza exhorted the moral philosopher, not to abuse or deride, but to seek to understand.<sup>1</sup> His highest endeavour should be to gain the widest, most inclusive, most "synoptic" view of the universe, and his deepest feeling should be that "cosmic emotion" which the sense of unison with its vast order inspires.

This, then, is the most searching criticism that ethical theism has to meet—that its characteristic process of selection is invalid, because it is subjective and arbitrary, and because it leaves out of its account of the highest Reality elements which, however deserving of moral condemnation, are as real a portion of our experience as the noblest ideals of virtue or of art. By what right do we take upon ourselves the exclusive apotheosis of the latter, when the former enter so deeply into the constitution of our world? Does not evil as well as good enter into the All, which is also the True?

This accusation of arbitrariness has been brought against religious thought from the

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics*, Preface to Part III.

empirical as well as from the pantheistic standpoint, and it forms the burden of more than one of Hume's most acute passages of criticism. In his essay on "A Particular Providence and a Future State," he subjects to a keen and destructive analysis that common type of religious thought which argues from the goodness that we know in our present experience to an all-perfect and all-powerful Author of Good, and then proceeds to deduce from this thought of the Deity conclusions regarding a perfect and glorious future state. Hume's criticism of this line of argument is that, while in form it is an argument from effect to cause, it actually attributes infinitely more to the cause than is warranted by our actual knowledge of the effect.

"If the cause be known only by the effect," so his argument runs, "we ought never to ascribe to it any qualities beyond what are precisely requisite to produce the effect: nor can we, by any rules of just reasoning, return back from the cause, and infer other effects from it, beyond those by which alone it is known to us. . . . The knowledge of the

cause being derived solely from the effect, they must be exactly adjusted to each other; and the one can never refer to anything farther, or be the foundation of any new inference and conclusion." And again, "As the universe shows wisdom and goodness, we infer wisdom and goodness. As it shows a particular degree of these perfections, we infer a particular degree of them, precisely adapted to the effect which we examine. But farther attributes or farther degrees of the same attributes, we can never be authorised to infer or suppose." The same argument appears in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, where it is pointed out that man "may be fully convinced of the narrow limits of his understanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodness of superior powers, since he must form that inference from what he knows, not from what he is ignorant of. . . . You are obliged, therefore, to reason with him merely from the known phenomena, and to drop every arbitrary supposition or conjecture."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues*, Part XI. (ed. M'Ewen, pp.144 f.) The history of these dialogues forms a very curious passage in the record

This line of argument, when applied to the traditional "argument from design," leads directly to the conclusion afterwards made familiar by Kant, that, while this argument rightly points to the belief in a Mind designing the universe, it cannot carry us further, nor prove that this Intelligence possesses infinite wisdom or power.

Now, within the presuppositions which were common to Hume and the theologians whom he criticised, his conclusion appears to be incontestable. If the argument to the Divine Character be of the nature of an induction from experienced fact, then the empirical logic reinforces the demand of pantheism that no fact should be suppressed or neglected, and that the induction should be at once impartial and universal, as far as a finite thinker can make it so. On these terms it is undeniably true that thought cannot rise above the level

of philosophical literature. Written about 1751, they were not published till 1779, three years after Hume's death. The following year we find Kant studying them in a MS. translation by Hamann, just as he was about to start the composition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of the most famous passages of which is directly and almost verbally adopted from Hume's work. (See Dr Bruce M'Ewen's Introduction to the *Dialogues*.)

from which it starts, that the conclusion must not contain more than the premises, or rather must contain elements mingled in a like proportion, and that it cannot be allowable in the course of the argument to extrude the evil and raise the power of the good to infinity. The accomplishment of such an impartial and universal survey may, indeed, be beyond the power of the human mind; but at least it remains the logical ideal or regulative principle of thought. It is true that individual thinkers may and will differ widely in their interpretations of experience; for, as has been wisely said, "in a universe which is of so mixed a character that optimism and pessimism are both of them plausible views . . . there are plenty of phenomena to lead anybody to any conclusion."<sup>1</sup> But this merely proves that the "dropping of every arbitrary supposition or conjecture" which Hume enjoins is less easy than his words might lead us to imagine. On empirical principles their use must at least be reduced to a minimum; nor can the subjective disposition of the thinker give his conclusions, whether they are optimistic or

<sup>1</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Modern Essays*, p. 101.

pessimistic, any universal validity. The principle of selection is none the less arbitrary that it is apt to creep in unconsciously, and deflect the judgment from its ideal impartiality.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, the position of ethical theism is to be made secure, it must be built up on some foundation radically different from either of those which we have yet considered. If God is to be thought of as the *best* we know or can conceive, and not merely as the object of our *widest* knowledge, if the Spiritual Order is in truth more real than the Natural as well as ethically higher, we must clearly break with the presuppositions of pantheism and empiricism alike. But we can only do so in the name of a more adequate philosophy; nor can the logical criteria which undermine ethical theism be abandoned, unless we have first found some truer criterion and some more

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a passage in John Stuart Mill's essay on "Nature" (*Three Essays on Religion*, popular ed., p. 23), in which he criticises those thinkers who "are anxious for some more definite indication of the Creator's designs, and undertake the dangerous responsibility of picking and choosing among his works in quest of it." In condemning this procedure as "perfectly arbitrary," he reaffirms the central point of his great predecessor's criticism.



adequate philosophic method to take their place.

Thus the form which our problem now assumes is, whether such an alternative method exists, and, if so, what are its characteristics and what the range of its validity. If an answer is to be found, and with it a basis for ethical theism, we must turn from a pantheistic or empirical to a *teleological* view of life. In other words, we must reconsider the presupposition that all the facts of life stand on one level and bear the same relation to the underlying reality of the universe. In place of this idea we must reaffirm the Aristotelian view that the world of our experience constitutes a hierarchy of being, in which lower forms of existence and of life point on to higher forms, and that these latter, in proportion to their elevation in the scale of evolution, represent the highest reality more adequately and more fully.

This conclusion may be supported by the words of a distinguished thinker who appears more often as a critic of the theistic position than as an ally. In discussing the relation of the Absolute to the world of our experience,

Mr F. H. Bradley says that "the doctrine of degrees in reality and truth is the fundamental answer to our problem."<sup>1</sup> So also, in what is perhaps the central passage of his greatest work, Dr Edward Caird lays equal stress on this point of view, though giving a somewhat different expression to it. He shows that "the general principle which must underlie any such solution . . . is to be found in the use of the two kindred ideas of *organic unity* and *evolution*. The former idea satisfies our demand for universality, in so far as it enables us to think of the world, as pantheistic religion thought of it, as one great whole or system, whose principle of unity lies in God. . . . But the idea of evolution carries with it the conception that, while all existences manifest their Divine Original, they do not all manifest Him equally; but that there are grades of existence, rising from the inanimate to the animate, and from the animal

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality* (2nd ed.), p. 487. Cf. Ch. XXIV. ("Degrees of Truth and Reality"), especially pp. 376 f.; and for a fine statement of the high rank of the religious consciousness, see p. 449: "The man, who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness, seeks he does not know what."

to man, and in man's history from the stage in which he is nearest to the animal to a more and more full realisation of that which distinguishes him as man. It bids us regard the highest point to which creation reaches as the clearest revelation of what it all means." <sup>1</sup>

Thus, in place of the assumption, which is common to the logic both of empiricism and strict pantheism, that all facts, simply as facts, stand on the same level and have an equal claim, however their ethical or æsthetic values may differ, to influence our conception of the ultimate truth of things, the evolutionary or teleological view justifies us in distinguishing between lower and higher, worse and better, less and more perfect existences. It justifies the treatment of the latter as giving a truer insight into reality, and not merely as possessing a higher ethical claim on our respect and allegiance. Thus it provides a ground for the process of selection and discrimination, in which the higher aspects of our experience—goodness, beauty, and righteousness—are alone attributed to the Divine Nature, while their contraries are subordin-

<sup>1</sup> *The Evolution of Religion*, II. 75 f., cf. 125.

ated or rejected. The Spiritual Order, while it is often obscured in our present experience, and at times apparently crushed down by the relentless pressure of what is material, may then be recognised by metaphysics not less than by ethics as the true and universal End.

## CHAPTER II.

### TELEOLOGY AND MORAL EXPERIENCE.

THE argument of the first chapter has been directed to establish two main points—the element of discrimination and selection, especially moral selection, in theistic thought, and the fact that this selection, while it is a necessary condition of advance in thought or life, can only be justified by a teleological view of the universe. On such a view, it is not only possible but needful to distinguish between different factors in experience, assigning to some, which at the present stage of the world's experience are powerful and even seem dominant, a lower and a vanishing place, and accepting others as the key to the underlying mystery of life and as an earnest of the nature of its goal.

But before we go on to elaborate this

thought, it may be well to turn back for a short time to consider certain indications of a teleological tendency in the other views which we have considered. It has been suggested already that, in point of fact, an entirely complete and impartial survey of experience, such a survey as should do equal justice to all its factors, good and bad alike, is not within the power of the human intelligence. The personal equation necessarily comes in, and before the universe or any portion of it can be reduced to system at all, some principle of arrangement must be brought into play. The process of selective discrimination, which the ideals of pure empiricism and pure pantheism alike brand as subjective and arbitrary, is too deeply rooted in the human mind and is too essential to its working to be wholly banished. As the late Professor James gently reminded the *Monist*, which had summoned its readers to "imitate the All," the advice was wholly beside the mark—"We are invincibly parts, let us talk as we will." And again, "We can invent no new forms of conception, applicable to the whole exclusively, and not suggested origin-

ally by the parts. All philosophers, accordingly, have conceived of the whole world after the analogy of some particular feature of it which has particularly captivated their attention."<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see that the finite mind, confronted with the infinite variety and wealth of the universe, must of necessity take up some definite standpoint from which to survey and map out the field of knowledge. Or, to vary the metaphor, it must find some master-key to open the many closed doors which face and challenge it. But, because it is finite, this principle of inquiry and classification must be drawn from some particular sphere of experience. The ideal of a complete impartiality between all the spheres is unattainable save in the perfect and all-comprehending experience which philosophers have attributed to the Absolute. Since, then, selection is necessary if we are to advance in the path either of knowledge or of practical activity, and since to the strict pantheist it is inadmissible, while to the empiricist it must be determined by merely subjective

<sup>1</sup> *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. 8, 40.

causes, the teleological philosophy has a clear advantage. In the first place, it openly acknowledges that all belief, as well as all conduct, only becomes possible to a finite being through a process of selection and elimination; while at the same time the doctrine of "degrees of truth and reality" enables it to claim that this process is not arbitrary, but that, in ideal and to some extent in fact, it follows the course laid down by the innermost constitution of the world.

Over against this view there stands the ideal of pantheism, which would see God equally in every region of experience; and we naturally took Spinoza as the greatest representative of pantheism in Western thought.<sup>1</sup> But it will serve both to bring out the inherent difficulty of carrying out consistently the pantheistic ideal, and also to introduce the next step in the argument, if we pause to note how, even in Spinozism, the selective

<sup>1</sup> Here, as in the previous chapter, I use the term "pantheism" in its strict sense. When Prof. James in the passage already quoted says that in interpreting the universe "the pantheist takes his cue from growth," he is speaking of evolutionary "pantheism" which, *qua* evolutionary, has a teleological character.



and teleological element creeps in.<sup>1</sup> It is true that at the first and for long it is rigorously excluded. The object of philosophy is understood as eternal and unchanging Reality, and the only process acknowledged is the development of all things from the One, by the same timeless implication with which one truth proceeds from another in a logical or mathematical system. Yet, while it is Spinoza's deliberate and consistent aim to follow out this view to the end, it is one of the great interests of his philosophy that, in its later and distinctively ethical stages, a different factor appears, of whose full import he seems hardly to be aware.

It would indeed be a long, and perhaps at this point a needless, task to trace in full detail the different stages by which this new thread enters into the fabric of Spinoza's thought; but in the *Ethics* the real turning-point is probably to be looked for early in the Third Part, where he passes straight from the "essence" (*essentia*) of each thing to its "endeavour to persist in its own being" (*con-*

<sup>1</sup> In the following paragraphs, even more than elsewhere, I am indebted to Professor Pringle-Pattison.

*atus in suo esse perseverare*).<sup>1</sup> This change from the statical and logical category of "essence" to the essentially dynamical idea of "conation," or "the endeavour after self-preservation," is none the less radical that it is so suddenly and, it seems, so unconsciously made. But its occurrence bears eloquent although silent testimony to the absolute necessity of some recognition of teleology as soon as we enter the ethical sphere, however difficult such recognition may be to fit into a consistent pantheism.

For with this idea of conation or effort there enters also the idea of the end to which it is directed. And so throughout the later portions of the *Ethics* we are conscious of the conception of an ideal of human nature, a true end of man which the good man alone fulfils; and this conception finally overshadows the original tendency of Spinozism to treat the good man and the bad as each in his own way an equally true and necessary manifestation of the Divine Nature. It is true that Spinoza is reluctant to attribute to God any difference in attitude (if the phrase is permis-

<sup>1</sup> Part III., props. iv.-vii.

sible) towards His differing creatures. The good man does not seek that God "should decorate him with rewards of virtue" other than virtue itself. He does not even seek to win any special manifestation of love from God in return for his own love. Yet, while this idea of the aloofness and impartiality of the Divine Nature is preserved, the fact remains that the good man stands in a different relation to God from that of other men, knows Him with a direct and intuitive knowledge which is denied to the evil, and in this knowledge, which is itself perfect blessedness, finds his own true nature and fulfils his proper function as a man.<sup>1</sup> And from this it surely follows that in a special and higher sense he reproduces in his own character and activity the nature of the Being with whom he has entered into so special and direct a relation.

Spinoza's effort to bring these two sides of his thought into harmony may be studied in his letters to Blyenbergh even better than in the *Ethics*. On the one hand we find such a statement as this: "Besides the fact that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Schol.* to Part II. *ad fin.*, V. xix., with V. xxv. to end.

grave imperfection would be imputed to God, if we say that anything happens contrary to His will, or that He desires anything which He does not obtain, or that His nature resembled that of His creatures in having sympathy with some things more than others, such an occurrence would be at complete variance with the nature of the divine will." But this is quickly qualified by a counter-statement which will repay quotation in full: "It is true that the wicked execute after their manner the will of God: but they cannot, therefore, be in any respect compared with the good. The more perfection a thing has, the more does it participate in the deity, and the more does it express perfection. Thus, as the good have incomparably more perfection than the bad, their virtue cannot be likened to the virtue of the wicked, inasmuch as the wicked lack the love of God, which proceeds from the knowledge of God, and by which alone we are, according to our human understanding, called the servants of God. The wicked, knowing not God, are but as instruments in the hand of the workman, serving unconsciously, and perishing in the

using; the good, on the other hand, serve consciously, and in serving become more perfect.”<sup>1</sup>

In this letter Spinoza gives clear expression to conceptions which are implicit in the concluding passages of the *Ethics*. Thus we find in the thought of the great representative of pantheism that very element on which theism rests but which pantheism sets out to deny—the ideal and teleological interpretation of goodness as the true end of human nature, and as the most adequate manifestation in the whole range of our experience of the Reality which underlies and supports all things. For perfection—the perfection of nature which is proper to man as man—is expressly identified with “participation in the deity,” and thus the converse position is justified, that the Divine Nature is to be known most of all through the highest and purest qualities of manhood. But this last truth is the very nerve of the argument for an ethical theism.

Before we leave these letters, one more sentence may be quoted which will carry our

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXXII. (XIX.), tr. Elwes, pp. 333, 335; cf. p. 347 f.

argument a step further. "For my own part, I avoid or endeavour to avoid vice, because it is at direct variance with my proper nature, and would lead me astray from the knowledge and love of God."<sup>1</sup> Here the thought is present that the Good is not a mere object of intellectual contemplation, but that its essence is to make a claim on the active allegiance of the good man, and that his response to its claim and his striving to avoid what is evil determine how far he can apprehend the highest truth. Evil action makes a true knowledge of the divine character impossible; and the converse truth is still more vital, that it is only in acknowledging the claim of the Good on our own life that we can gain any measure of assurance of its final and universal sovereignty.

We must use some key in interpreting the world, both because our own minds are essentially finite, and because it is impossible to acquiesce in the thought that all levels and grades of experience are equally valid expressions of the deeper nature of the universe through which our knowledge ranges. If this universe is to

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXXIV., p. 342.

be intelligible at all (not to say moral) it must contain diverse "degrees of truth and reality"; while to seek the hidden meaning of life in the experiences which conscience condemns as belonging to the lower level would introduce a hopeless and final rift in our experience. Nay, to seek the nature of the universe anywhere but in the good would involve as radical a disloyalty to our highest powers as to embrace the evil as the end of action. If there are indeed degrees of reality, and if there is any true end of human character or any valid teleology of human life, then these two principles must ultimately harmonise; and so the conclusion is reached that to attribute supreme reality to that which is morally best is no arbitrary hypothesis or "pious imagination," for any other course would in the last analysis be "at direct variance with our proper nature."

This point is of great importance, for here the whole argument hinges. So it demands some further development. There are two steps in this effort to objectify and universalise the Good. First, the commands of the individual conscience are treated as authori-

tative because they testify to, or are derived from, a type or norm of human character; and then this in turn is represented as bearing a vital and constant relation to the central reality of a universe which includes many beings besides man. The subjectivity of the individual must first be transcended, and then the subjectivity of humanity as a whole; and both steps need justification if we are to escape Hume's accusation that the whole process is hopelessly arbitrary. I have already tried to show how far even the strict pantheism of Spinoza finally advances towards admitting that the idea of human perfection has a true objective validity; but it may strengthen the argument if we turn from Spinoza to Kant.

The Kantian ethic in its central ideas is clearly an effort to provide absolutely firm ground for the first of our two steps. One of its leading principles is that the categorical nature of the imperative of duty—its absolute authority for the individual—is inseparably related to its universal character. The individual conscience only wields an unquestioned and unquestionable authority when it issues



commands that are imperative for all alike. Complete obligation must be universal obligation. So, in his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Kant gives the following as the first form of the categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law." The law of duty lays its authoritative command on the individual not in virtue of the qualities which separate him from, but in virtue of those which unite him to, his kind. Just because the Moral Law springs from what is most fundamental in human nature it is obligatory on all without distinction.

But it may be said that this theory, attractive and symmetrical as a theory, breaks down when it is tested by the facts of life. Kant, it may be argued, saves the universality of the moral imperative only by stating it in so abstract a form that it is neither adapted to give any practical guidance in questions of actual morality nor fitted to express the real variety of the moral life. If, on the other hand, we avoid Kant's excessive abstractness, and seek to bring a real and

concrete content into the idea of duty, our imperative proves to be no longer uniform or "categorical," but to vary widely for different races and civilisations, and even for different individuals in the same society and the same age. In the course of the four generations which have passed since Kant wrote, material both from history and anthropology has rapidly accumulated, on which the student of comparative morality may draw to support the contention that the moral judgments of mankind show not unity nor agreement, but rather an infinite variety.

Now the full answer to this objection would involve a long and exhaustive inquiry; but there are two or three considerations which may be brought forward to show in what direction an answer may be sought. It is indeed true that Kant's method of reaching ethical universality, while it has a great impressiveness and value of its own, is too brief and summary to be fully adequate or satisfying in itself; but this was the characteristic, or the fault, of the century in which he lived. It has been the lesson of the Nineteenth Century that the moral life is too wide and

rich to be permanently confined within the limits of any one ethical formula. Yet for our purpose this is not wholly a drawback. For the application of the principle of evolution in this sphere does not result in the mere heaping-up of a vast number of varying or divergent facts regarding the ethical judgments of mankind. It also yields the idea of *development*; and in the light of this idea we see that standards and customs, which to a more advanced morality appear wholly ignoble or degrading, had a relative justification in their own place and time, and that out of the apparent confusion wide ideals and definite lines of advance have been slowly but certainly emerging.

Thus if the Eighteenth Century in its interest in the formal side of morality failed to grasp and to allow for the wealth of detail which marks the moral experience of the race, it is not less true that the thought of the Nineteenth Century tended to go to the opposite extreme, and to lose the sense of form and consistency and connection in the study of the moral life on its material side, with its baffling variety and its frequent

confusions and contradictions. But if we are in earnest with the idea of teleology, we must apply it on a wider scale than the individual, and we must be prepared to find that the approach to unity and harmony is slow and indirect. Further, we must recognise that as a rule each individual, and even each nation, is given one branch of the universal problem to work out rather than the whole, and that nations and individuals alike, as their tasks and circumstances change, are called on now for one form of moral effort, and now for another. It is enough if we can perceive that these successive phases are not unrelated, but that they are controlled by the presence of an ideal and an end, whose character and relation to the supreme End can only be seen when the long effort has drawn to a close, and when the history or the life can be scanned in its completeness.

Nor can we fail to see that, while the emphasis laid on various virtues at different times does frequently amount to a formal contradiction, the time has long since passed when any one virtue could be taken as in itself constituting the moral ideal. Even in

the case of the individual, that ideal demands that the dominant virtue should be tempered and complemented by its opposite. In regard to the two most notably divergent expressions of the ideal, those of courage and gentleness or the active and passive orders of virtue, thinkers so far apart as Plato and Pascal unite in recognising that they must be harmonised, nay, that they have been in a measure harmonised in all the noblest characters.<sup>1</sup> And so, even on the material side, the principle of teleology, if it is widely understood and patiently applied, enables us to see that many old contradictions have already been transcended, and to believe in the working of an increasing purpose, which is even now gathering the scattered members of ethnic morality into the organic union of a complete humanity.

But, to return for a moment to the more formal aspect of the question, even here we may see some significance in the Kantian

<sup>1</sup> The passages referred to are given at length in my *Philosophical Study of Christian Ethics*, pp. 7-13. In Chapters IV. and XI. I have discussed more fully the doctrines of the common good and the personal character of the moral ideal which are briefly touched on below.

view. If the form of morality—or, to put it less technically, the fact of obligation—is the same for every normal human being, that is in itself a fact of importance. The fact that conscience exists and operates in all men alike, whether in the consciousness of well-doing or in remorse, testifies to an underlying unity of mankind on the ethical side, even though the concrete sentence of conscience varies from man to man. And as reflection proceeds, this idea of absolute obligation to follow the good irrespective of momentary desire takes the more definite form of singleness of motive, or moral purity and disinterestedness; so that in a sense all morality is seen to be summed up or to be implicit in the one characteristic of entire self-devotion to the good. Nor is this an entirely empty idea, although it is wide enough to receive now one actual content and now another. The idea of the man of devoted and disciplined will is happily neither indefinite nor unfamiliar, because the reality which it expresses is actually known to us.

But beside this growing emphasis on the inwardness of virtue, and this tendency to

sum up all goodness in the conception of the good will, there runs, as Green has so clearly shown, a complementary and related tendency to recognise as truly good only those activities and ends which are superior to the competition of man against man, and in whose pursuit all alike may join.<sup>1</sup> But this principle, when it is fully worked out, involves a quite definite concrete determination of the idea of good; since that idea in its final form must be common and non-competitive, and so must exclude not a few of the things to which in different ages a high place in the scale of ethical values has been assigned. Thus even by this more formal path we may reach a point from which the vision appears of a universal end of moral endeavour in which the Common Good shall extend to all mankind; and this carries with it the idea of a harmony deep enough not only to unite man with man, but also to bring to the individual that concentration of will and liberty of spirit

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Bk. III. Chh. III. and IV., and §§ 251 f.

which comes through self-surrender to a wider and a higher good.<sup>1</sup>

But this appeal to these general characteristics of moral progress, and to the immanent teleology which, as we even now in part perceive, is welding the varying moral ideals of mankind into the unity of one supreme "Kingdom of Ends," may be strengthened by another and a less abstract consideration. This is the part played by great personalities in the moral education of mankind. "We live by admiration" more than by the virtues of the intellect; and men show their essential unity less by the creeds which they profess than by the characters which they reverence. The influence of those who are both great and good surmounts the divisions of age and race and custom, and compels not only a common homage but a common imitation. The attractive and constraining power, exercised by the greatest of the world's saints and heroes over men whose circumstances and opinions differ by a world's

<sup>1</sup> I am here applying—or, as their author would perhaps hold, misapplying—the two criteria of the higher degrees of truth and reality given by Mr Bradley in Chap. XXIV. of *Appearance and Reality*—viz., "extension" and "harmony."



diameter, is the strongest proof of the fundamental solidarity of human nature; and this solidarity comes to light chiefly in the moral sphere. Nowhere do we find so clear a testimony to the fact that the ideal of goodness is not finally an arbitrary or subjective one as in this common attitude of admiration; nowhere else can there be so firm a ground for the faith that the deepest aspirations of human nature go out towards a Good which has more than a merely individual validity, and which claims the allegiance of all.

By some path such as this it may be that we shall return to a fuller appreciation of Carlyle's doctrine that admiration for the morally great figures of history is the surest—and, we may add, the most universal—foundation not only for morality but also for religion. "No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life. Religion I find stand upon it; not Paganism only, but far higher and truer religions,—all religion hitherto

known. Hero-worship, heartfelt prostrate admiration, submission, burning, boundless, for a noblest godlike Form of Man,—is not that the germ of Christianity itself? The greatest of all Heroes is One—whom we do not name here! Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter; you will find it the ultimate perfection of a principle extant throughout man's whole history on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, like Carlyle, we may pause in silence. These words of his have in truth carried us beyond the first step of our argument on to the second. For his message is that moral greatness, as manifested by great men, not only has a right to command the universal homage and imitation of mankind, but that such lives are the truest and highest expression known to us of the ultimate Reality, that in them as nowhere else is the Divine Voice heard speaking to men and summoning them upward. Thus—whether with the Jews of old we recognise the supreme authority of a divinely given Law, or whether we think of the moral ideal as receiving its fullest and most urgent expres-

<sup>1</sup> *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture I.

sion in heroic lives or a supreme Life—in either case it is through man's active, moral, striving nature that the revelation to him of the Divine Nature more especially and directly comes. The part of the pure intellect is secondary, for the revelation being essentially one of character and purpose, its appeal is directed chiefly to the will. Nor is faith merely a matter of intellectual assent: it is rather an attitude of active loyalty, in the face of many opposing facts and forces, to that which is felt to have an unquestionable right to rule.

Thus in Professor Ward's words, "Here as everywhere—in its highest as in its lowest form—faith is striving and striving is faith. The whole conscious being is concerned: there is not merely the cognition of what is, there is also an appreciation of what it is worth, a sense of the promise and potency of further good that it may enfold; there is a yearning to realise this; and there is finally the active endeavour that such feeling prompts."<sup>1</sup> Thus the selective character of religion, which we found so hard to justify

<sup>1</sup> *The Realm of Ends*, p. 449; cf. p. 426.

while arguing from the purely intellectual standpoint, falls into place and is seen to be both natural and inevitable, when we recognise "the primacy of the Practical Reason" of man.

At the same time it has become clear that the process of discrimination is no arbitrary one. On the empirical or pantheistic view, for which all facts are facts, no less and no more, the selection must be more or less arbitrary, for the point of attack is determined by the accident of the individual thinker's disposition and outlook. But on the idealistic view of life, all its facts are not on the same level. There is another element beside mere fact—the element of obligation. And just because this is *sui generis*, and not adequately to be explained on merely empirical grounds, it affords the point of departure and the principle of selection and determination which we seek. Because it is incommensurable with the ordinary data of the percipient consciousness, and makes a unique demand on the active nature of the thinker, he may find here the theistic argument, without being guilty of arbitrariness.

ness or mere subjectivity. In assigning to this moral element in experience a unique importance in the interpretation of the universe, he does not act arbitrarily; for the moral imperative comes to him in no accidental form, but with a character of obligation which he cannot disown. Neither is it subjective, for the ideal of goodness has an objective validity and authority for all men.

We have now approached, or rather have already taken, the second step in the argument, whereby we pass from the universality of the moral ideal to its ontological reality; but it calls for some further elucidation on the philosophical side. This second step assuredly becomes easier when the first has been taken. When the ideal of goodness is seen to be objective, in the sense that it has a claim on the wills of all men, it is hard to deny that this points to its objectivity in the fuller sense that it has a unique place in the universe as a whole. Thus the conclusion reached by ethics leads back once more to the doctrine of the Real; or, viewing the question from the other side, we may say with Lotze

that "the beginning of metaphysics lies in ethics."

But the legitimacy of this procedure may still be questioned. It may be objected that we have at the outset separated the "ought" from the "is," the imperative of duty from the facts of experience, and that, having thus emphasised the independence of the two spheres, we have now no right to argue from the former to the latter, or to reunite the severed aspects of reality and ideality. The objection is a serious one, and if it is to be adequately met, our procedure must be set in a clear light. At the outset, the initial distinction must be reaffirmed. As Professor Pringle-Pattison has said, "Here Kant's position is impregnable; there is no passage from 'is' to 'ought.' Whatever scheme of ethics we follow, whatever standard we adopt as the touchstone of the rightness of an action, . . . the ultimate judgment which enjoins the realisation of that standard must contain an unconditional and irreducible 'ought.'" <sup>1</sup> The category of obligation be-

<sup>1</sup> *Two Lectures on Theism*, p. 23. The complementary truth is finely stated on pp. 31 f., 41.

longs to a different order from the categories of fact, whether external or psychical, and stands over against them in its own full and unborrowed right.

But just because it has this irreducible character, and this inalienable independence, it must finally make its claim on the attribute of reality as well. For the "ought" and the "is" cannot remain ultimately independent; or, if they do, man will find himself living a double life in the two separate worlds of the ideal and of unideal fact, and this double life cannot yield him complete or permanent satisfaction. It is true that we do actually live in large measure such a double life, torn between the divergent claims of the Natural and the Spiritual Order. But this condition cannot be permanent: one of these orders must always become increasingly dominant and subordinate the other to itself. And if this is true of practice, it is not less true of theory. Either we must subordinate the ideal, and seek to show by some genetic or psychological construction that the "ought" is a form or reflection—or in the last analysis a delusive appearance—of the "is"; and this

we refused to do, because such a reduction does violence to the very foundations of the moral life. Or we must hold that the rightful superiority belongs to the "ought," and that its content represents the deeper reality. To do so does indeed carry us beyond what is presently experienced; but it is "the venture of faith" to take this step forward in the confidence that it will lead to a richer and more satisfying experience, of which the constraining power of the ideal as it is here and now seen and accepted constitutes an earnest. And, as we have already seen, this venture is not an intellectual one alone; for it carries with it the obligation to work for the realisation of the ideal in the actual circumstances of life, and to prove the present efficacy of that which we believe to be best. If we cannot as moral beings consent to reduce the "ought" to the "is," then the only other path to a harmonious and unified life is the steep and painful one of those who seek to transform the "is" into the likeness of the "ought."

But it is the converse of this truth which at present we are especially seeking



to grasp—that the ideal is not a mere vision or aspiration, but the reflection in our consciousness of a deeper reality, over against the actuality of the natural world in which we are commonly content to live. The argument for this position may be placed in a somewhat different light if we consider the full implications of the idea of absolute obligation which lies at the heart of morality. If I am conscious of a categorical imperative, calling me if need be to “lose the whole world” in order to fulfil its behest, I am surely at this point, as nowhere else, brought into contact with what is truly real, with the bedrock on which life and thought and action are ultimately founded. For how can the imperative of duty be either categorical or absolute unless it brings us into close and vital relation to the central truth of the universe? How, above all, can it be universal in its authority unless it springs from and points towards universal truth?

It is indeed possible that a “hypothetical imperative” may be based on a lower order of truth: a floating and unattached ideal—a sort of *imperativus pendens*—may appeal

to the mind in some circumstances or in some moods. But if the voice of duty suffers no evasion and rightly claims to override all considerations of inclination or prudence, is not this because it summons us to no mere cloudland of the ideal, but to a land which, unseen as yet, is not less real and infinitely nobler and more satisfying than the land which we are called to leave? "They say that they seek *a country*"—such is the account given of their quest by those who have made the venture of faith; and they set out because, amid all uncertainty as to the way before them, they are fully persuaded of the reality and the worth of that which they seek. As they go forward, their assurance does not wane but grows ever stronger, that the impulse which called them forth was no subjective fancy or wandering desire but a voice from the heart of the universe—in the language of religion, the voice of God; and so, even when an opportunity is given them to return, they still hold on their way.<sup>1</sup>

These two steps of the argument, and the way in which the second follows naturally

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heb. xi. 10, 14-16.

upon the first, are clearly illustrated by the history of Greek philosophy. The first was taken by Socrates, whose lifelong endeavour it was to disengage the "ideas" of morality, the true concepts of the various virtues, from their wrappings of superstition and prejudice, and to set them forth in their clear and universal validity. But, setting out from this point, Plato was impelled to go further—or it may be that Socrates had already done so. At all events, the dialogues from the *Meno* to the *Republic* are largely occupied with the effort to show that universals, and especially ethical universals, are not only authoritative for man, but are themselves most truly real. In them the Ideas are described, not merely as the regulative principles of knowledge and of conduct, but as themselves the object of all true knowledge and the end of all right conduct, as the supreme and final Reality. From their logical and ethical validity Plato passed, by a process not wholly unlike that which I have sought to trace, to their ontological reality; and in so doing he became the founder of ethical idealism.

But the position of the *Republic* and its great companion-dialogues is not yet final. In them the ideas are real, but they are still remote and static; and in consequence their fitness to be taken as the guiding principle of the moral life, or as the key to the life of the universe, may be called in question. So in Plato's later dialogues there enters the conception, afterwards taken up and developed by Aristotle, of the Divine Mind, which is the pattern and archetype of good and the Final Cause of all things.<sup>1</sup> Such a final step must in truth be taken if the argument for ethical theism is not to be left incomplete. Just as it is not enough to establish the universality of conscience, or to point to the authority exercised over all men by those ideals of goodness which have been slowly evolved from the confusion of primitive moral judgments, but we are impelled to give them a place of unique reality in the universe as a whole; so they cannot be left finally standing in effortless perfection in a transcendent ideal world. If they are to have full authority for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Phil.*, 22 c.; *Tim.*, 28 f.; *Laws*, 900 ff.; and especially *Soph.*, 249 A.

us, they must be thought of as expressing the will — nay more, as manifesting the character—of the Supreme Being, whose attributes, though they may and must infinitely surpass, cannot fall below that intensity of thought and life and goodness which we have known in our highest experience.

To this thought we shall return in the next chapter. But before going further we may again reflect that it is upon the unique authority of conscience and upon the element of infinity in moral obligation that this high argument primarily rests. On this ground alone can be founded an argument from our experience to the infinite perfection of the Divine Nature, which is not open to the charge of basing an infinite conclusion on finite premises. In one sense the premises are finite, as all our experience is involved in finitude, and here we single out one aspect of our experience and rest all on that. Yet this bold procedure is justified inasmuch as this moral aspect of our nature is unique and incommensurable with all the merely empirical world. In it, there impinges upon our finite consciousness an element of the infinite, a

goodness which claims our limitless allegiance; and those who have most fully entered into this experience, and most faithfully followed its leading, have been willing to trust it as against all the questionings of ordinary experience, and have finally rested in the belief that it manifests the ultimate Reality, not as a Being wholly removed from kinship with man, but as One who orders the whole discipline of life, guiding it to an end which is no other than likeness to Himself—"that we may be partakers of His holiness."

This discussion has been faithful to the spirit, if not always to the letter, of the teaching of Kant. It is to him that we owe the most impressive statement of the guiding principle which we have followed, that the moral life contains an experience going beyond the limits of both sense-experience and the logical understanding, and bringing us into contact with a reality deeper than that of which they tell. It is Kant's view also that the moral argument brings in that compelling force and that element of the infinite, which is lacking in the "physico-theological argument" from the presence of design in nature

and of beneficence in the natural world ; while in the concluding passage of the *Critique of Judgment* he shows that, when once the moral argument has been recognised as central, we are fully entitled to use all the evidence for natural teleology in favour of a teleological view of the world as a whole. Yet the moral argument provides the nerve of the whole ; and I for one should hardly quarrel with the Kantian position that the certainty which it provides is rather moral than intellectual. For, if in one sense this certainty is less than the demonstrative certainty of abstract science, since no man can acquire or learn it from another, in another sense it is more surely founded, since it springs from a deeper and more personal experience.<sup>1</sup>

In form, the argument certainly has departed from the lines laid down by Kant. He makes an elaborate, and to many an unconvincing, detour, showing that a final reconciliation must be reached between virtue and happiness, and that this adjustment can

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Canon of Pure Reason," sect. 3 *ad fin.*

only be made by God. Our argument has proceeded more directly by maintaining that the goodness to which conscience testifies and summons cannot be less than ultimately real. I have tried to show the close relation of this argument to the teleological point of view, but from a slightly different standpoint it may be described as a moral version of the ontological argument. In essence, as we have seen, it goes back to Plato, nor has it been unfamiliar since.<sup>1</sup> And if the reasoning of the last paragraphs has been in any degree cogent or conclusive, it will have become clear that the argument in this moral form possesses a force which to many minds it lacks in its traditional and more purely intellectual form. It is when the idea of a supreme Perfection appears in the imperative of conscience, rather than when it is stated as an intellectual ideal, that its validity is most convincingly felt.

At this point it may perhaps be objected that this reliance on the moral argument for theism does less than justice to the other

<sup>1</sup> Cf. its use by Martineau. On its place in his thought see a note by Professor H. R. Mackintosh—Caldecott and Mackintosh, *Selections from the Literature of Theism*, p. 400.



aspects of human nature. Does not, it may be asked, this theory that the revelation of God is always directed to the conscience and the will overlook the religious value of the emotions, and especially of love for what is beautiful wherever it is found? In thus emphasising the supremacy of goodness as the highest reality, do we not unduly narrow the sphere of the spiritual, and thus run the risk of repelling many men whose deeper thought naturally flows in other than purely ethical channels?

It may certainly be admitted that this objection has no small force against certain of the more severe and rigid forms in which ethical theism has been stated. Yet there is nothing essentially inconsistent with this theory in the acknowledgment of the Beautiful as one of the chief means by which the Divine Nature becomes known to men, and one of the chief instruments by which it lays its constraint upon them. This side of religion has indeed at times been forgotten, yet never without loss. It is not hard to see how it has come to be obscured; for the prophets and reformers, who have most insistently pro-

claimed the moral character of God, have often had little leisure or opportunity in their stern conflict with moral evil to dwell on the kinship of the Beautiful to the Divine. Yet we may still hold that this truth forms part of the complete religious message. Nor was it wholly forgotten even in the most strenuously ethical of religions; for the psalmists of Israel could find a place in their song both for the thought of "the beauty of holiness" and for the prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."<sup>1</sup>

Once more, it becomes easier to connect the thought of the Beautiful with a definitely ethical view of religion, when, with Carlyle, we think of the divine revelation to man and appeal to his conscience as coming more often through personalities than through codes of ethical law. The appeal of a noble character is not limited to the strictly ethical side of man's nature. It has a certain æsthetic aspect; or rather such characters stand at a level at which the Beautiful and the Good are no longer sundered, still less hostile, but are unified and harmonised. So

<sup>1</sup> Pss. xcvi. 9; xc. 17.

it has been said that the good man is the greatest artist; and the saying is true if we add that he is also the most unconscious artist, for it is left to other men to realise the harmony and attractive power of his life. Yet that power does shine forth, and shines forth not only to attract but to judge those whose lives are stained and unlovely. Hence a constraint is laid upon them, which is all the stronger that it springs from the harmony of moral purity and moral beauty, and thus appeals to their power of aspiration and imitation from either side. Thus also it represents and mediates the appeal of a higher Beauty and a more perfect Goodness.

To this another consideration may be added. Not only as displayed in character, but also as manifested in nature and art, beauty makes its own inevitable appeal to the active powers of man. It may indeed influence him silently, when he is unconscious of any active response. But such influence is not all; for true beauty, whatever may be its ultimate source, never comes as a mere invitation to passive or indolent enjoyment, but always as a summons and a stimulus to some fair action or to

the production of some beautiful thing. This impulse, this imperative of the beautiful, comes most habitually and clearly to the artist, who is at the same time most fully persuaded of the reality of the beauty which he sees and strives to express. But it visits others also at times, like the dream which came to Socrates at the close of his life, saying to him in a phrase which is hard to render in English, ὦ Σώκρατες, μουσικὴν ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου, urging him who had never been a poet to honour the god Apollo by composing a single poem before his death.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it less true that to all men the vision of beauty must bring a rebuke for its absence from their own lives, and a call to make them more conformable to the ideal of which they have caught a far-off glimpse. Of this also we find an illustration in Plato's record of his master's sayings. On one occasion only, we are told, Socrates deserted the city and surrendered himself to the quiet play of Nature's influence; and the dialogue which tells of the

<sup>1</sup> *Phædo*, 60 f. Cf. Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, pp. 47-9, and Ch. XII.

talk which then took place by the Ilissus closes with this prayer to the gods of the spot, "Give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and inward man be at one."<sup>1</sup> So it is that beauty not only reveals a reality higher and worthier than that of ordinary life, but summons those who behold it to rise towards the region of its abode, and thence to bring some reflection of it into their own daily lives.

<sup>1</sup> *Phædrus*, 279.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE THEOLOGY OF ARISTOTLE AND CHRISTIAN THEISM.

UP to the present point this essay has been occupied with the examination of ethical theism, both in regard to its ideal and to the method which it follows. We have seen that its ideal is to determine the deepest reality of the universe in terms, not of the whole of our present experience considered in its admixture of good and evil, but only of the higher elements in it, estimated by the most adequate conceptions that we possess of goodness and beauty. And from the ideal of theism, so understood, its method necessarily follows. That method is in the first instance selective; and the selective process, by which the good and the beautiful are retained and their opposites rejected as

unworthy to be identified with the highest reality, is justified by the fact of the moral obligation and constraint which goodness and beauty exercise over the human spirit, however much they may be overshadowed in actual life by the baser elements of experience.

Further, we found that the process is teleological as well as selective; for if the belief in the validity of the ideal, as revealing the true end of the complex processes of life and history, is to be consistently and securely held, it must be based on the conviction that the ideal is in truth the ultimately real. But this, expressed in the language of religion, means that goodness is more real than aught else that we know, because it expresses the will and character of God, in so far as we can apprehend them. Thus the unique facts of conscience and the moral constraint of goodness confirm and justify the ineradicable tendency of the human spirit to find God, in Goethe's words, in "the highest that each man knows." Nor does the inner witness of the moral imperative stand alone. It answers to the outward revelation of the Divine in the manifold goodness and beauty

which are displayed in the world of nature and history; and in this response, and the harmony to which it points forward, the exercise of faith and the evidence of religion consist.

In so far as it has now become clear what is the nature of the claim that the Good and the Beautiful provide the truest expression within our experience of the innermost being of the world, and in what direction the justification of this claim must be sought for, the chief object of the present essay has been attained. The argument has indeed been traced merely in outline, and on all sides questions arise which could only be answered in a full metaphysical discussion. But there is one question regarding the possibility of conceiving the highest Reality as essentially *good*, rather than as merely powerful or wise, which is directly suggested by the previous argument. This problem is one that can hardly be left, even in such an essay as the present, without some attempt at an answer.

In stating the problem *how* we can think of the Supreme Being in terms of goodness,



we may recall the conclusion already suggested, if not fully proved, by the nature of moral experience, that the Final End or Reality cannot be conceived in any statical sense, but only as the essentially active Divine Mind or Spirit.<sup>1</sup> But to every student of the history of philosophy it must be apparent how near this line of thought brings us to the "first philosophy," which is also "theology," of Aristotle, in whose "spiritual monotheism" Greek thought has been said to culminate.<sup>2</sup> So we may now examine the points both of contact and difference between Aristotle's great conception and the Christian form of theistic belief. Nor in so doing shall we be engaged in a merely academic inquiry; for the theological thought of Aristotle has done much to mould the historical forms of Christian theology, and it may well be held that Aquinas and Dante showed a truer instinct than many of their successors in taking it as the framework of their interpretation of Christian truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Windelband, *History of Philosophy* (Eng. trans.), pp. 145 f.

In the endeavour to estimate the contribution of Aristotle to later theistic thought, we may leave the more detailed and temporary elements in his cosmology on one side, and concentrate on his general conception of the world. His central idea is that it consists of a hierarchy of being, or of a graduated ascent or progress from lower to higher degrees of reality. At the foot of the scale is pure *matter* ( $\nu\lambda\eta$ ), the formless substrate of all being, or mere potentiality which as yet has no actuality. This conception of matter as the potential ground of all activity and the potential recipient of all form, while it is as yet inert and formless, is clearly a limiting notion. It represents the lower limit of all thought; or perhaps one should rather say, the point at which thought cannot yet operate, but from which it must set out on its long ascent. But if pure matter is thus, as it were, the absolute datum of evolution and of the thought which knows it, at the summit of the ascent pure *form*, free from all material embodiment, is its absolute goal; and form ( $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ ) is for Aristotle also actuality ( $\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ), a conception closely related to that

of activity. Thus pure form or activity is the highest idea to which our thought can rise. It is the Final End of the whole upward progress of the universe, to which all things aspire. Hence it can be no other than the Divine Nature itself, which is most perfectly reflected in those beings who have advanced furthest from the merely material towards the spiritual activity of contemplation, and towards which they of all beings are most powerfully drawn.

Thus Aristotle argues from the eternal movement of the universe, from the *nisus* of all things towards greater purity of nature and a more entire and unimpeded activity, to a supreme Cause of movement—the End of all striving and all desire—who is God. But his conception does not fall into the mechanical form to which later systems of theism (or deism) have descended. It remains true to the teleological ideal, for it represents the divine action on the world, not as an initial impulse given from without and transmitted by the working of natural and quasi-mechanical causation, but as drawing all things in the universe towards that inward ideal of activity and

blessedness which is at once the universal End and the final Reality. This conception of the relation of God to the world is summed up in the profound and pregnant words, *κινεῖ ὡς ἐρώμενον*,—"He moves all things as the object of their love." Or, as the same thought is more fully expressed, "There is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved."<sup>1</sup> In other words, God's action on the world is not to be thought of as having the nature of physical impulsions, but of the attraction which draws the soul towards the object of desire. He is the most real Good which, as Aristotle proceeds to show, is the object of right and reasonable desire,—Himself changeless, but drawing all things towards His own perfection.

We may deal with this great conception of Aristotle's, in the first place (I.), by showing how it answers to the religious and intellectual needs of man, and then (II.), more

<sup>1</sup> *Metaph.*, Book XII. Ch. VII. (A, 1072<sup>a</sup> 24 ff., 1072<sup>b</sup> 4.—tr. W. D. Ross).

briefly, by indicating where it requires development and modification before it can be harmonised with the Christian view.

## I.

First, then, it has the great merit of effecting a threefold synthesis; for by its aid it is possible to do equal justice (1) to the permanent and the progressive elements in experience, (2) to the ideals of transcendence and of immanence, and (3) to those of unity and variety.

### (1) *Permanence and Progress.*

The Aristotelian theology answers to two of the great demands of the human heart and reason, for a sure and lasting foundation amid the uncertainty and the change of life on the one hand, and on the other for the reality of progress and of the struggle to realise the good in the actual world. The first demand is perhaps more especially connected with the religious, and the second with

the moral, consciousness; but there are religious and ethical elements in both alike. The first demand is in essence an appeal from the changefulness and instability of our common experience to an experience above the reach of mutability. On one side, it is the protest of the heart against the destruction by time of its most treasured and most hardly won possessions, against the swift decline of things and experiences whose beauty and goodness have been acquired through much suffering and toil. On the other side, it is the protest of the intellect against the reduction of eternal truth to passing appearance. It is the protest of Plato's idealism against the Heraclitean doctrine that "all things flow and nothing remains"; and it carries with it the claim that the objects of true knowledge do remain in an eternal perfection raised above the power of time and its changes. Human apprehension may and does vary in its clearness, but the divine world, which is the true end and home of the philosophic life, abides in changeless perfection; so that, even amid the flux of the senses and the experience gained through them, it

is possible for the lover of wisdom to reach after and lay hold on an experience of the eternal, in which his spirit may "find rest from its wanderings" and be at peace.

Much might be said of this demand for the permanent, made most eagerly by those who most keenly feel the transience of our ordinary knowledge and of the ordinary objects of desire and pursuit. It might be shown how the desire for an abiding satisfaction, which is a manifestation of the emotional side of man's nature, and the intellectual effort to establish the enduring validity of our higher knowledge, have co-operated to produce a philosophy of the Permanent, and to renew it when it had crumbled away. Or we might turn from the philosophers to the poets, and trace the working of the same aspiration through the poetry of many ages. And the further we went, the stronger would become our sense that some solid ground must underlie so persistent and various a demand. But at present it is enough to indicate how this demand is met in the conception before us.

In spite of all Aristotle's criticism of his

master's Theory of Ideas, this principle of the earlier theory remains unchallenged in his own thought, that the eternal and the absolutely real are one. He unites this thought with that of the living and active nature of the Divine Mind, which he accepted from Plato's later dialogues, by teaching that the highest and purest activity is also the most tireless and constant. But God's activity is neither dependent on any external impulse or co-operation, nor is it subject to any hindrance from without ; therefore, being perfectly spontaneous and unimpeded, it is also eternal, and every being who looks towards and in some measure imitates it may partake in its eternity.<sup>1</sup> "If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder ; and if in a better, this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God ; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality ; and God's essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say, therefore, that God is a living being, eternal, most good,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Eth. Nic.*, VII., 1154b 26 ; X., 1177b 33.



so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.”<sup>1</sup>

But Aristotle was still sufficiently a child of his age to desire to connect perfection of being and intellect with an exalted and unique position in the universe of space. Thus he relates the perfect and unimpeded activity of the Divine Mind to that which he considered the most perfect and constant motion, the circular motion of the highest heaven or *primum mobile*; for this, he held, was nearest to the divine and partook most fully of the nature of its activity. This naïve identification of the cosmic with the spiritual order has long since become impossible to maintain in any literal sense. Yet as a metaphorical and poetic expression of the truth that there is an ultimate synthesis of activity and rest it has its own enduring value. For do we not find it reproduced in the transcendent imagery of the *Paradiso*, which was for Dante something more than imagery, and which still has a profound truth for the thinker who

<sup>1</sup> *Metaph.*, Δ, 1072b 24 ff. Hence the Schoolmen developed the conception of the divine activity as *actus purus*.

can follow his lofty flight? Others also have expressed the same thought—last of all one of the workers for suffering humanity of our own day, who in his vision of the summit of man's activity and aspiration sees beyond it a further vision still:—

“No strife the vast reveals,  
But perfect peace indeed—  
The thunder of spinning wheels  
At rest in eternal speed.”<sup>1</sup>

It is less, however, the exact formulation of the doctrine that concerns us than its substance. For it is one of the great attempts to satisfy the desire of man to look up from amid the chances of life to a reality which knows no vicissitude, in whose contemplation he may find the earnest and the assurance of true permanence and true repose. But there is one defect which is apt to mar the influence of a philosophy which lays the chief stress on the changeless and eternal character of the truly real. There is a danger that this unchanging reality may be thought of as raised so high above our actual experience, and that it may be defined so entirely by contrast with

<sup>1</sup> Sir Ronald Ross, *Philosophies*.

the world of change, that it ceases to be a true and effective ideal for us. When the eternal is conceived as separate from the temporal, it is apt to absorb all reality into itself and to reduce the temporal process not only to flux but to illusion. In this case the wisdom of the philosopher who seeks to know and rest in the eternal does indeed become a *meditatio mortis*, so far as the efforts and interests of this life are concerned. His highest longing comes to be directed towards escape and release.

But this mystical attitude, which seeks to gain the eternal by renouncing the temporal, and treating it as unworthy of any expense of effort and as incapable of forming the medium of a truly spiritual experience, involves a denial of the reality and worth of the moral life as we know it. It discredits the idea of moral progress by treating the sphere and conditions of such progress as unworthy to be compared with the sphere of eternal truth. In its eagerness to reach and rest in that higher region, it disowns the progress—struggling, broken, partial, yet still a progress—through which goodness is alone

realised in the life that we know. Because of its impatience with the losses and the ravages caused by time, it casts the shadow of doubt upon the moral advance which is secured in time.

But our whole argument has been based on the assumption that this moral life, in all its present imperfection, is yet the firmest fact in our experience and the surest guide to the Reality which underlies all things. The whole teleological interpretation of the world depends on the trustworthiness of the teleology, and especially of the moral teleology, which is the key to our mingled experience in the present and which points towards goodness as the secret of the universe. It might be a small thing that this or any other philosophical argument should be set at naught; but it is not a small thing if the striving and effort of the moral life is to be condemned as an illusion because it takes place under the conditions of time. The deepest postulate of the human conscience is that its work is a real work, that moral progress represents a real advance and secures a real gain, and that it is not a mere shadow-play above which the one

eternal Reality stands changeless in remote and unmoved perfection.

In this determination to stand by the life of moral struggle and progress, and to find in it the surest manifestation of the nature of reality, is to be found the nerve of Pragmatism; and the protest of Pragmatism against every attempt to discount the value of moral experience in the interest of a timelessly perfect Absolute is one that cannot be allowed to die. But this essential "interest" is also conserved in the theory which we are considering, if it be read in a somewhat less purely intellectual light than that of Greek speculation. For it does not reduce the temporal process to unreality. It does indeed distinguish — as we must distinguish — the human from the divine, the temporal from the eternal; but it does not evacuate the former of its own proper validity and truth. It represents the process of evolution, natural, moral, and spiritual, as a true progress, carrying those who take part in it forward towards the supreme Reality, to which they are continually drawn by the "love and desire" which it kindles in their spirits. Thus at every point

in this progress, the truest reality both for intellect and will belongs, not to the good or the knowledge already attained, but rather to that which is still unrealised but which is revealed in ever new fulness and clearness. And because the moral life bears men on towards this Final End, it may be described both as a true progress and as a progress to the truth. Thus the claim of goodness and of the effort after goodness to be more than mere illusion, nay, to be the surest ground of human knowledge, which Pragmatism strongly and rightly affirms, is fully safeguarded here.

But at the same time the besetting danger of Pragmatism is avoided—the danger that, in asserting the reality of the ethical struggle in which we are now engaged, we may lose sight of the yet higher reality of its object and end. It is not enough to rest our faith on the reality of progress alone: that faith will crumble away in the stress of life, unless it be supported by the deeper belief in the reality of the end towards which progress is directed. The beacon that guides it must be no wandering light but a steady and a

constant flame. The moral life is not only a real struggle from moment to moment: it is an effort to draw near to a most real and abiding goal. And both these characteristics of the moral life receive a firm foundation in the great thought that the Supreme Reality of the universe is also its Final End, and that He draws all things towards Himself by the love and desire which He awakens.

## (2) *Transcendence and Immanence.*

The antithesis between transcendence and immanence is closely related to that which we have just considered, and the two conceptions must be harmonised in a way that is not dissimilar. But first it may be well to note wherein either, taken as sufficient in itself, fails to interpret adequately the relation of God to the world. On the defects of a philosophy of pure transcendence it is hardly necessary to enlarge at the present time, for they have for long been emphasised and made familiar. When applied to the world of nature, this conception leads to the deistic idea of a god whose nature and activity are

summed up in the category of creation or primary causality, and who has no further part to play when the order of the universe has once come into active being. But such a conception has now few supporters; for it is clear that a deity thus outside the universe, whose function has begun and ended in his action as the great First Cause, has little value for cosmology and none for religion.

But even in a more ethical form the category of pure transcendence fails to achieve its end. It is possible to conceive of the Divine Being as the embodiment of the highest and purest forms of beauty and goodness, and yet at the same time, and in the very effort to purify these qualities from every taint of earthly imperfection, to imagine them as so highly rarefied and so completely separated from the goodness and the beauty which we know, that they cease to have a normative value either for knowledge or for conduct. If the effort to exalt the Divine results in mere separation, and in the negation of any possibility of a unity binding earth to heaven, then the real significance and the practical value of religious faith disappear together.



Once more the ideal of the wise man must be that of escape, and the path towards it must be the *via negativa* of Oriental mysticism, in which all determinations—those of the moral life among the rest—are successively left behind. There remains no downward path by which any inspiring influence may descend from the transcendent and divine region for the uplifting of the life of earth. The acuteness of this problem is clearly brought out in the later dialogues of Plato, which are largely occupied with the endeavour to bridge the too great gulf which in the *Phædo*, and even in the *Republic*, separates the ideal from the actual world. The course of Plato's own thought shows clearly the inadequacy of a philosophy of pure transcendence, and the problem as he left it has been one of the permanent problems of philosophy.

But on the other hand, a system of pure immanence is no less defective. This fact is perhaps less obvious than that which has just been stated, but it follows directly from the earlier part of our argument. For pure immanence is identical with pure pantheism. In the last resort it results in the complete

identification of God with the World or Nature; and thus it either leads to the "acosmism" of Spinoza, or to the acceptance of the totality of experience as the full manifestation of the character of God, according as our approach is made from the side of the One or the Many. The latter form of the doctrine is clearly fatal to the most distinctive forms of religious belief, for, if it be the whole truth, religion has nothing to add to or subtract from the knowledge of Nature; and indeed in this form pantheism is only, in Schopenhauer's phrase, "a polite atheism."<sup>1</sup> But in either form the theory of pure immanence treats experience as a single dead level; and if we are to establish the existence of "degrees of truth and reality," we must find a norm or standard, rising above the process itself, by which the comparative value of its different portions may be estimated. But this necessarily introduces an element of transcendence; for a norm implies an ideal, and an ideal, however intimate its relation to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, pp. 25, 234. Also Prof. Henry Jones (*Hibbert Journal*, July 1907, p. 756): "God immanent in nature is only nature over again—*Deus sive Natura*."

actual, must rise above the actual and draw its authority from a higher sphere. The true criticism and evaluation of life must be carried out in the light of an ideal, which we believe to be the goal of the temporal process, and not a mere element like other elements within it.<sup>1</sup>

Thus if the ideal is to exist at all, it must in some sense be transcendent, while if it is to be an ideal *for us* it must not less have a certain character of immanence. Neither aspect is sufficient in isolation, and each must in some way be qualified by the other. But such a union of immanent and transcendent elements is indeed to be found in our moral and religious experience, when it reaches

<sup>1</sup> Thus the late Dr James Adam, in writing of the Platonic Theory of Ideas, pointed out that "the eternal and unchangeable realities which, according to Plato, the Soul in her past history beheld, and which she hopes to behold again hereafter, are necessarily 'yonder' (ἐκεῖ). If they were only immanent and not transcendent, they would cease to be what they are, that is, an ideal; for an ideal must always be beyond." And a few pages later, "We may sum up the matter by saying that just as by virtue of its transcendence the Idea is never wholly realised in the particular, but stands apart, an object of ceaseless aspiration and desire, so by virtue of its immanence, the Idea is at the same time always being realised, in proportion as the particular approximates to it." —(*The Religious Teachers of Greece*, pp. 430, 438.)

its clearest expression. That whole experience is founded upon the reality and authority of the ideal as it confronts and rises high above the pettiness of our actual life. The True is something more than we have ever apprehended, the Good something higher than we have ever reached. And as the good life advances, the sense of disproportion grows instead of diminishing, for each stage of the journey accomplished is seen to be but the beginning of a further stage.

Yet it is not less true that in the very process by which the transcendence of the ideal, or of the Divine Will, becomes more evident, its inwardness comes to be increasingly felt. It is felt to be most intimately woven into the innermost fabric of the soul's life ; and, however clearly we recognise the height and the objective character of the Good, it is not less clear that its authority has at the same time an inward source in the light which is evoked by and answers to its manifestation without. In the religious life deep calls to deep, when the response to the divine truth which underlies all things is felt to come from the innermost, which is also the most truly

human, portion of man's nature. Man does not forego or leave behind his own nature when he learns to know and to follow the divine ideal: rather he discovers his own deeper and truer self. If the Good is above, it is also within him. If the moral life is transcendent as regards its goal, it is none the less autonomous and truly human; for man is "then most godlike, being most a man."<sup>1</sup>

Thus transcendence and immanence may be seen to be two phases or moments of man's deeper experience, which are equally necessary to its full development. The sense of transcendence appears in the constraining power and authority of the moral imperative, with its claim to stand in its own right against all the negations and infirmities of the actual. It also appears more simply and directly in the feeling common to many religions—perhaps to all—that our highest experience gives no measure of the wealth of the universe, but that there remains an infinite reserve of wisdom and joy which the highest

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato's suggestion that ἀνδρείκελον and θεοείκελον are in reality equivalent terms (*Rep.*, 501 B., 589), commented on by Adam, *The Vitality of Platonism*, pp. 62 ff.

flight of inspiration can neither fathom nor exhaust. It is a fundamental intuition of religion that "the half hath not been told," but that beyond the loftiest attainment or imagination of man there is a More and a Greater. As the Indian poet said long ago—

"Though a man journey from the perfect to the perfect,  
Yet that which is perfect yet remains over and above  
all."<sup>1</sup>

But beside this truth theism places the affirmation that the ideal does enter truly and directly, though never completely, into human experience, nay, that it is indeed "the master-light of all our seeing," and that if its shining be not recognised in the heart of man it can never be known elsewhere. In this sense the life of goodness is indeed "a journey from the perfect to the perfect," a progress towards reality; but, however far this progress advances, that which lies beyond is always greater than that which is experienced or achieved, and while the ideal is known as immanent, it never loses the awe of transcendence. It is a voice in the soul, but it is also the Voice of God.

<sup>1</sup> Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads* (Eng. tr.), p. 166.

This view of immanence and transcendence, progress and finality, is in full accord with the Aristotelian conception of the Divine Nature; and indeed the synthesis of the two aspects has seldom been more clearly expressed than in a passage which has been often quoted, but which may well be quoted once again. It shows that, while Aristotelianism is commonly understood as in the main a philosophy of immanence, yet in it the thought of transcendence is recognised as even more important. Towards the close of the great Twelfth Book of the *Metaphysics*, from which the passages already cited are drawn, Aristotle says, "We must consider also in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good or the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does. For the good is found both in the order and in the leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order, but it depends on him."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the order is not merely immanent, though it must have this immanent exist-

<sup>1</sup> 1075<sup>a</sup> 11 ff. (tr. W. D. Ross).

ence if all parts and all individuals are to understand and to perform their own functions in the operation of the whole: it has also a transcendent existence in the mind of the general, and this is its most fundamental aspect and the logical *prius* of its character as distributed throughout the army.

Nor shall we be unduly straining the metaphor if we think of the "order" as more than the mere discipline of the army, or than its routine organisation and harmonious working together at any given moment. We may also imagine it as engaged in a prolonged and complex campaign. In this case the "order" comprises not only discipline and tactic but strategy, the idea of which is present to the various soldiers and officers in varying degrees, but in its completeness to the general alone. He alone has full knowledge of the objective to be aimed at, as of the steps by which it is to be reached; and thus his view of the campaign stands for the ideal in its transcendent form. But it is also needful that every man under him, whether he knows much or little of the bearing of the movement



in which he is immediately engaged on the progress of the campaign as a whole, should know his own duty, and should share in the spirit and purpose of the general, however far he may fall short of his wider outlook; and this illustrates the immanent aspect of the ideal, as it penetrates the hearts of men and, even amid imperfect understanding, wins their undivided allegiance.

### (3) *Unity and Variety.*

In the sentences which follow, Aristotle goes on to show how this idea applies to the ordering of the actual world, with its infinite variations of nature and function, and thus suggests that in the same wide thought there is embraced a third synthesis, that of unity and variety. "And all things are ordered together somehow, but not all alike,—both fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but they are connected. For all are ordered together to one end."<sup>1</sup> Now, in harmony with the whole trend of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

Aristotle's philosophy, the unity must be thought of as teleological rather than as material. It is to be looked for rather in a common end of all things than in a single underlying substance. Thus it is a living unity, and for us it must be realised through long progress and patient endeavour. But, so thought of, it is clearly the unity of moral beings acting in free concord; and thus it has two leading characteristics. There is within it room for the widest diversity, comprising many grades of being and many varying characters, while in the progress towards it freedom and order increase at the same time. So, in the next sentence, Aristotle compares this unity to that of a household, in which there are different grades of service, but in which the most completely ordered lives are lived not by the lowest members but by the highest, by those who are most truly free.

These two thoughts of the unity of the Divine End of life, towards which all are drawn, and of the variety of the paths which lead towards it, are finely expressed by Dante :—

" Among themselves all things  
 Have order ; and from hence the form, which makes  
 The universe resemble God. In this  
 The higher creatures see the printed steps  
 Of that eternal worth, which is the end  
 Whither the line is drawn. All natures lean,  
 In this their order, diversely, some more  
 Some less approaching to their primal source.  
 Thus they to different havens are mov'd on  
 Through the vast sea of being, and each one  
 With instinct giv'n, that bears it in its course." <sup>1</sup>

This passage suggests not only that there is an infinite number of stages in the progress from matter to God, and so that created beings are drawn onward with an intensity that increases with every fresh advance ; but also that, while the End is one, there are many different courses which lead to it across the " vast sea of being," nor is the guiding or the discipline which directs the progress the same for all. Both thoughts are valuable, but we may dwell with somewhat closer attention on the first. When we take a wide survey of evolution, we see that, at every

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, Canto I., 103 ff. (tr. Cary). In the succeeding passage (128 ff.) Dante allows that the existence of free will may cause divergences from the course marked out. For the main ideas which we have been tracing, cf. III. 82-7; XXVI. 28 ff.; XXVIII. 106, 128.

step of its forward movement, Aristotle's description of the action of the highest Good as "moving all things by love and desire" gains a clearer truth and a more undeniable application. He himself teaches that, while the characteristics of each stage are carried on to form, as it were, the basis or groundwork of the next, yet the dominant character of each shows an advance on those which had gone before. Thus, while man continues to exercise the vegetative life which characterises the plant-world, and the life of sensation and motion in space characteristic of the animal, the specific and determining factor in his life is the activity of reason, which he alone possesses, and through which he is able to answer to, and in his measure share in, the divine activity.

In the same way we may reflect that it is only by slow stages that the teleology which marks the higher life becomes manifest. At first, in the inorganic world, we see only matter moving in obedience to the laws of physics. The principle of motion is impulsion from without, and matter being essentially inert, only transmits the original im-

pulse without adding any unique or individual response of its own. It is indeed true that one important school of thinkers, the Panpsychists, with Leibnitz at their head, have interpreted even the material world as possessing a latent life or a subconscious intelligence. But this theory, even if it be accepted as the most adequate metaphysically, does not really undermine our present argument. For whatever the merits of Panpsychism as an attempt to unify all experience in one interpretation, its application to the inorganic world must remain largely a hypothesis, brought forward in the interests of consistency and continuity, but hardly verifiable by actual investigation. In our ordinary observation of and reasoning about the inorganic world, we are still tied to the categories of externality and mechanism. The free and natural use of the teleological principle belongs to the sphere of life and mind; nor can we readily dispense with the contrast between mechanical constraint and development towards an end, or the unconstrained pursuit of an ideal.

But while this contrast is an essential one,

it is not less essential to note that on the higher side of the antithesis there are many different degrees through which the principle of teleology advances to perfect clearness. In passing from the inorganic to the organic we at once find certain new characteristics, such as a definite and individual reaction to stimuli, the tendency to evolve towards a complex form, the reproductive activity with its momentous implications, and the power of the organism to repair injuries to its own structure. Thus teleology has entered the world of mechanism, though in a relatively undeveloped and unconscious form. But with the development of consciousness towards the full activity of the mind, and with the passage of instinct into reason, a higher, more definite, and more individual teleology comes into being. The end is not merely wrought out by an immanent formative principle: it appears before the mind, first as the idea of an instinctively desired good, and then as an end, clearly seen, freely chosen, and steadily pursued.

But there are still further and not less important stages to be traced; for in the

moral sphere we see the contrast between constraint and freedom reappear, and the drama of release re-enacted on a higher stage. For the natural life of impulse, even to a being who possesses the clearest intellectual outlook, is still a life of constraint, although the constraint of external force is exchanged for that of a dominant and imperious desire. Nor does the entrance of morality at once bring emancipation. Law comes in, but it at first appeals in large measure to hope and fear; and even when, a step further on, law is recognised as essentially ethical and independent of the "sanctions" which appeal to the natural man, it still has something of the character of compulsion and constraint. It is only when the Good is recognised as good, and as in itself supremely worthy of pursuit, that the *vis a tergo* finally becomes needless and falls away, because a *vis a fronte*—the attraction of the ideal—has taken its place.<sup>1</sup> Then only does the principle of moral teleology appear as the one sufficient guide of life. Then only does it become in the fullest sense true of men that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, pp. 440, 444.

the vision of the Highest “moves them as the object of their love”; when they have passed from the spheres of physical and of psychical constraint, and even from the sphere of moral tutelage, thus entering into the enfranchised citizenship of the Kingdom of Ends and the willing service of its King—

“And henceforth needing to be drawn, not driven,  
The subjects of His reign, while others of His rule.”

## II.

But after this long discussion of the points in which the philosophy of Aristotle is in harmony with the Christian type of theism, we must turn to the other side of the question, and ask wherein the thought of Aristotle fails to provide a fitting form for the content of the Christian consciousness. This question can be answered in one word,—it is because of the *intellectualism* of his theory that it falls short. “Thought in itself,” so his words run, “deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thought in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And



thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the highest activity, to whose perfection all things aspire, is conceived as the exercise of pure contemplation; and it is saved from all contingency and all dependence on things which exist in space and time by being directed wholly to itself. It has no variable or material object, but supplies its own object: it is a “thinking of thinking” (*νοήσις νοήσεως*).

But the objection at once arises,—How can a God thus separate and self-involved exert any influence on the world as a whole? What relation can such transcendent contemplation bear to our thinking, not to say to our active life? Does it indeed form more than an ideal limit of thought, and must it not fail to exercise any attracting power such as Aristotle contemplates on man’s will? These questions suggest that this doctrine fails to meet the criticism already suggested by Plato in the *Parmenides*, that, even “if

<sup>1</sup> *Metaph.*, Λ, 1072<sup>b</sup> 18 ff. (tr. W. D. Ross). The full development of this conception was reached in Neo-Platonism, where both its sublimity and its weakness can be most clearly seen—e.g., Plotinus, *Enn.* V. iii. v. ff. (Taylor, *Select Works of Plotinus*, pp. 265 ff.)

God has this perfect authority and perfect knowledge, His authority cannot rule us, nor His knowledge know us, or any human thing.”<sup>1</sup>

But even if this were the most valid ideal for the philosopher, it would not help the ordinary man; that is to say, it would not have that universal cogency which we have attributed to the moral ideal. For it is on the fact that the imperative of conscience and the attractive power of moral beauty are universal, that we have founded the belief that in goodness we come into contact with the deepest nature of the universe. Thus it is very clear that we must seek for an interpretation of the Good less purely intellectual than that which was dominant in Greek thought, and more closely in touch with the facts of moral obligation and moral advance. We know by experience that the goodness which at once judges men and draws them upward is a goodness which includes warmth of emotion, and one above all which is not afraid of suffering and

<sup>1</sup> *Parm.*, 134. Cf. *Phil.*, 62A, and E. Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, II. 20.

sacrifice. It is this type of goodness, and not any remote perfection of the intellect absorbed in the contemplative life, that impresses and attracts men, arousing the conscience, and bringing the conviction that here is an ultimate value before which all the values of the material world shrink into insignificance.

So it has been truly said that "the Being who is the ultimate source as well as the object of all love cannot be conceived as having no love in himself."<sup>1</sup> If the revelation of the Divine Nature is to lay a unique moral constraint upon men and to awaken their highest desire, it must show forth such qualities, albeit in far greater perfection, as win our reverence when manifested by our fellows. But this continuity of human with divine goodness—or, viewed from the other side, this derivation of the human from a divine original—implies that the latter must in some way share in the struggle, nay, even in the tragedy and suffering, of earth.

But the objection is bound to occur that this view derogates from the divine per-

<sup>1</sup> Edward Caird, *op. cit.*, II. 315; cf. 337, 341.

manence and perfection. Does not this development of our theory, it will be asked, destroy its whole balance by undermining the conception of the Divine Nature as abiding changeless above the change of earth, and as the constant End of the whole ever-moving process of our experience? Do we not now deny the satisfaction, which we formerly sought to secure, of the demand for stability and eternity in the supreme object of faith and of endeavour? And if so, do we not thereby negate one of the chief postulates of the religious consciousness? The question is a serious one, but it is not impossible to find an answer if we first make clear what is really involved in the immutability which we seek.

First, then, it is not the immutability which excludes action, nor does it consist in a statuesque passivity. This became clear when we saw how Greek thought was forced to advance from the statical ideas of Plato's earlier theory to a dynamical conception of the Divine Mind. It is still more clear when we reflect on Aristotle's thought, afterwards expressed anew in Dante's furthest flight

of imagination and insight, that the highest activity is neither restless nor intermittent, but that it has within it the secret of constancy, and that its intensity does not exclude repose. But the question now comes to be whether this conception can rightly be taken as comprising goodness in the natural, warm, vivid sense, in which it must be taken if human goodness is in truth the path to the knowledge of God. It is, indeed, no easy conception to rise to ; yet the difficulty is not in the last resort greater here than when the conception is advanced in an intellectualist form. It is at all times hard for the human mind, nurtured amid the flux of earth, to apprehend the idea of the eternal constancy, in which it would yet fain believe and find rest. But it is no harder to think of this constancy as exhibited in the moral than in the theoretic sphere. Among men we are as familiar with the tireless pursuit of a practical as of an intellectual aim. There is a constancy of the will not less than of the mind ; and just as the thinker may have to try many avenues of approach in the effort to reach the heart of his subject, while his object

and his activity remain essentially one, so it is also in the sphere of moral action. The fact that the means used alter with altering circumstances may prove rather than disprove the worker's constancy to his final aim. The manifestation of his purpose may alter as it progresses towards fulfilment, while the purpose itself remains steadfast, stable, and unchanged.

It is indeed true that we inevitably reach a point at which we are conscious of the failure of every such analogy. But it is something to establish the truth that unchanging constancy need neither imply passivity nor be confined to the region of the abstract intellect, but that it may also be manifested in the life of heart and will. Nay, since the coming of Christianity there have been not a few thinkers prepared to claim with Paul that the latter is its true home, and that, while knowledge may vanish away, "love never faileth." And even in the period before Christianity, an approach had already been made to this conception of the character and activity of the Eternal. In the history of Judaism the earlier con-

ception of God as remote and terrible, issuing His commandments from the darkness of the Mount, gradually led on to the faith of the later prophets, that God draws men upward by tenderness and loving-kindness, and even by sharing in their suffering and bearing the load of their sin.

Perhaps the most remarkable expression of this thought is to be found in the words of the great prophet of the Exile: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."<sup>1</sup> Nor are the words that follow less significant: "But they rebelled, and grieved his holy spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock?" At first sight this might be taken to be mere anthropomorphism; but in truth it represents a very profound thought of what the divine constancy really

<sup>1</sup> Is. lxiii. 9. Cf. Hos. i.-iii., xi. 8.

means. From the point of view of immediate human observation, there is change rather than constancy ; but a deeper reflection shows that the change is on the human side, and that the varying character of the divine discipline is but the refraction in the shifting and troubled surface of human history of the clear light of a single and constant overruling purpose. As the moral and spiritual temper of the nation changed, so the manifestation of the Divine Will changed also ; but behind and beyond these changes, and discernible through them, was a steady, unswerving purpose for the moral good of the Jewish people, and through them of the other nations of the earth.

Of this we may take one example. There could hardly be a more abrupt contradiction than that between Isaiah's proclamation of the inviolability of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah's message less than two centuries later, that resistance to Assyria was useless, nay, almost impious, and that the duty of the men of the city was to accept their fate and go quietly into exile. But when this stretch of history is looked at as a whole, the incon-



sistency vanishes. For the circumstances had changed, and a still more essential change had taken place within the nation itself. A great opportunity had been lost; the ethical condition on which Isaiah's word of hope was founded had not been realised; and another message was needed for the new time from the lips of one who, really though not apparently, carried on the succession which Isaiah had begun.<sup>1</sup>

We have indeed here returned in a less abstract connection to our former solution of the problem raised by the various and apparently inconsistent forms which the moral ideal assumes at different epochs in history.<sup>2</sup> The solution was that there may be no inconsistency inherent in the ideal itself, but only an apparent inconsistency in its manifestation in the infinitely various grades and forms of the moral life; and that, as the underlying unity emerges but slowly, so it can only be perceived when we take a long view of the process of history. But this is what we see in the passage quoted above.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. A. Smith, *History of Jerusalem*, vol. ii. pp. 223-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 40 f.

The prophet stands at a point far enough advanced in his people's history to admit of a long retrospect, in which the changes in its character and fortunes are seen to form part of one long process of discipline. Thus once more the teleological point of view proves to be the true one, since it ever looks towards the end, and judges of the process only when the nature of the end has been made clear. The way of moral progress, for nations as for individual men, is often winding and baffling to those who walk in it; but if they follow to the end an unexpected unity will appear.

Now if this interpretation be correct, the Divine Character has indeed a unity which change cannot touch or mar, but it is not a merely statical unity. It is one which is manifested in the conflict of history, and manifested very differently at different times, but which is still essentially the same, drawing men by many paths and through many forms of discipline towards an end which does not change. And, because knowledge of and likeness to this Character is the true end of all moral and spiritual progress, its

manifestation must be that of qualities which most powerfully draw forth desire and love.

A notable advance towards this view was made in the religious experience of the Jews, but its full development belongs to Christianity. Here, the attractive power is not the image of a sage, rapt in contemplation (though the silence of the mountain-side at night-time had also its place in the life of Jesus), but of One passing through the streets and the fields, sharing while He healed the sufferings of men, and finally through a supreme sacrifice "drawing all men" unto Himself. But if this Life, as so many ages have held, be the truest representation of the Divine Nature, then the element of self-sacrifice, with all its moral potentiality and worth, must lie deep in the heart of things; and that character of eternity (*species æternitatis*), to which human nature aspires with so great and constant a yearning, must be an eternity of peace—but of peace won through sacrifice ever-renewed, and its repose must not be that of mere impassivity, but the higher repose of active love.

Thus, as Green has said, "a death unto life, a life out of death, must be in some way the essence of the divine nature—must be an act which, though exhibited once for all in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, was yet eternal—the act of God himself."<sup>1</sup> And so the two terms, which we learned from Aristotle as the expression of the Reality which underlies all experience, are more closely related than we knew. On the divine side there is in truth constancy beyond the shadow of change, on the human side a real progress and gain in the moral life. But the two spheres interpenetrate; and it is just because the divine constancy has been revealed as an energising and uplifting goodness that at times man, in the midst of his human striving, is able in a measure to enter into the knowledge of the eternal peace.

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Green, "The Witness of God"—*Works*, III., 233; cf. xciii.

## CONCLUSION.

So far the argument has led us ; and we have reached a point from which it is possible to catch at least a glimpse of an ultimate harmony, in which activity is united with permanence and repose. Such a synthesis lies far beyond all our experience, but if we are right in holding that experience points towards it, then the effort to realise it in thought and practice will satisfy alike the intellect and the active and aspiring faculties of man. Even now it is in some degree clear that the differences of the Many and the One, and the contrasted ideals of motion and rest, can be harmonised only in the active exercise of Love. It alone is not diminished when it is divided, nor exhausted when it spends its hidden resources. It alone can unite divergent natures without destroying their individuality, and more than any power known to us it may truly be said to "operate unspent."

Thus, even for the intellect, it provides the nearest possible approach to the understanding of Spirit as essentially active and yet eternal. But to the will it appeals with a still more urgent call—the call to “live the eternal life as far as man may,”<sup>1</sup> by entering into that life of community and service in which, even here and now, the separateness of man as a natural being is transcended, and which holds forth the promise of an endless continuance.

If the life of goodness does thus reconcile and unite elements which stand in opposition, otherwise insurmountable, both for the intellect and the will, it is surely clear that the attribution of goodness, and especially of the pure activity of love, to the highest Reality is not wholly irrational. And if we hold to this interpretation of the Divine Nature, while recognising the deep mystery to which it finally leads and the weakness of every attempt which we can make to penetrate or explain it, yet there are certain questions to which it gives an answer that is luminously clear. If the life of love is the most truly

<sup>1</sup> 'Εφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν, *Eth. Nic.*, X. 1177<sup>b</sup> 33.

real life, and the final end of all progress, we can understand the absoluteness of its appeal to man, whether that appeal comes in the stern condemnation of all that is selfish by conscience, or in the aspiration which follows inevitably on the vision of the ideal.

At the same time the selective character of theism, which at the outset formed our problem, finds its justification. For not in all things equally is this divine character and activity bodied forth. In what is mean or evil it cannot be found. It is made known, not in the things that divide and distract men, nor in those which are to perish in the using; but wherever sacrifice and service, courage and goodness and beauty spring to light, there we may recognise the revelation of the Divine. But true recognition awakens reverence, and with reverence there comes the impulse towards imitation; while he who seeks to go forward, yielding to the Good this threefold homage of intellect, emotion, and will, is in the way which leads to full assurance of that simplest and most daring confession of religious faith—"Where Love is, there God is also."

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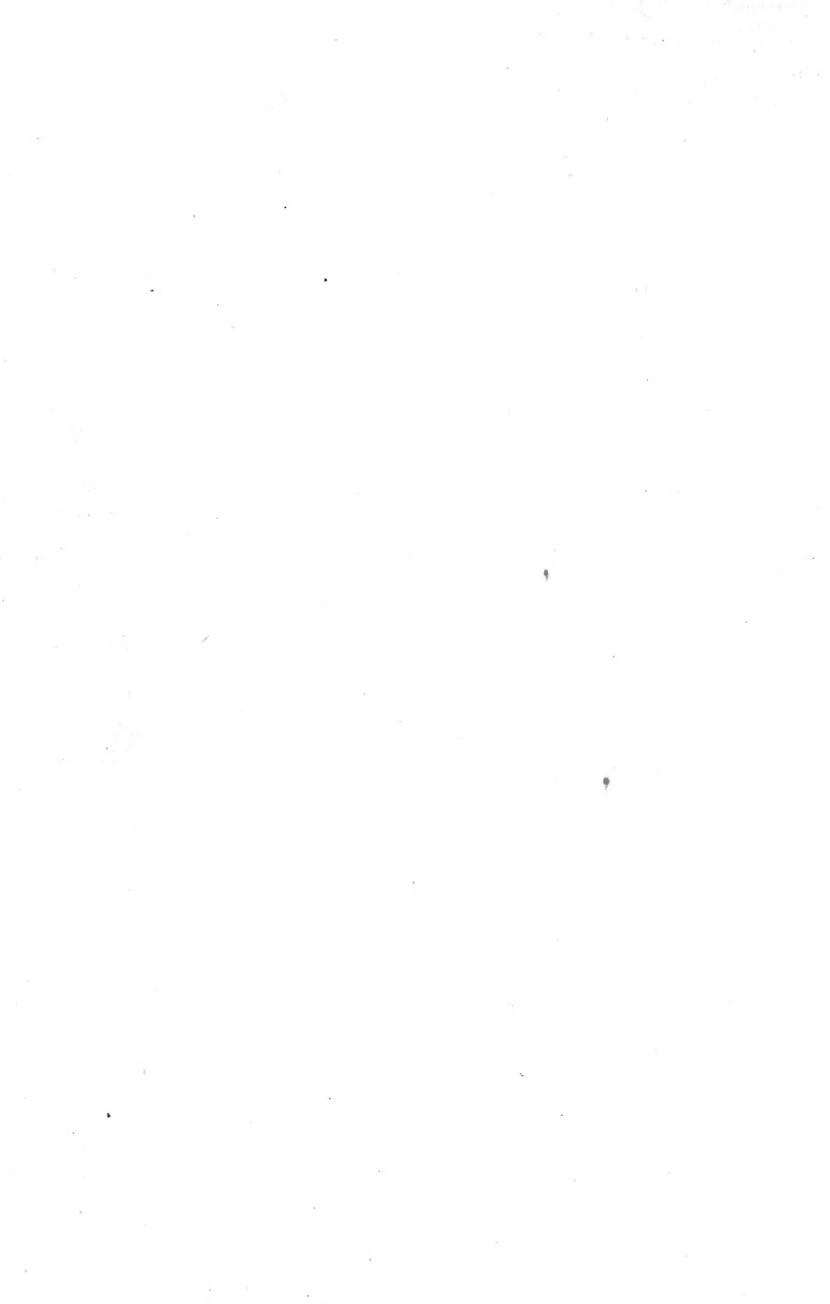
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